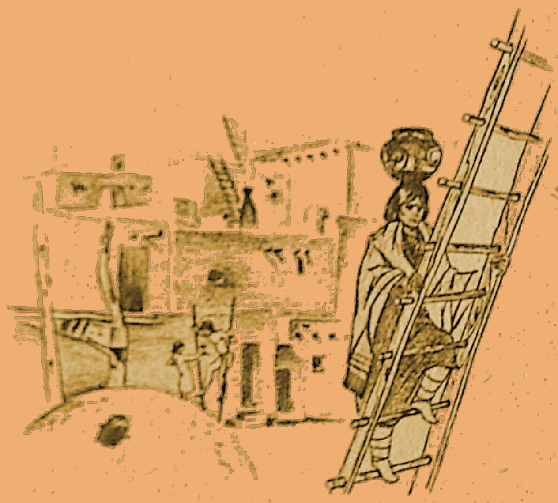
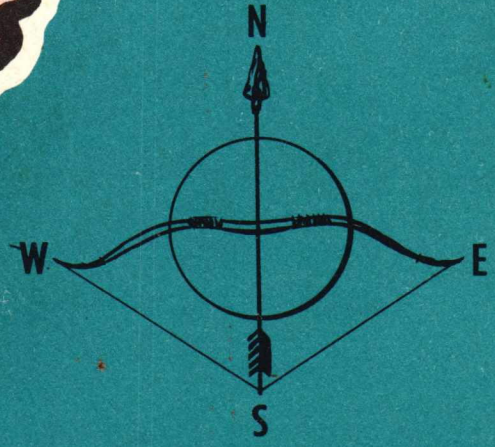
My Easy-to-Read True Book of

Indians

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My Easy-to-Read True Book of

Indians

PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ILLA PODENDORF, LABORATORY SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO. NINETY-EIGHT PER CENT OF THE WORDS USED ARE FROM THE COMBINED WORD LIST FOR PRIMARY READING.

BY TERI MARTINI

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES HESTON

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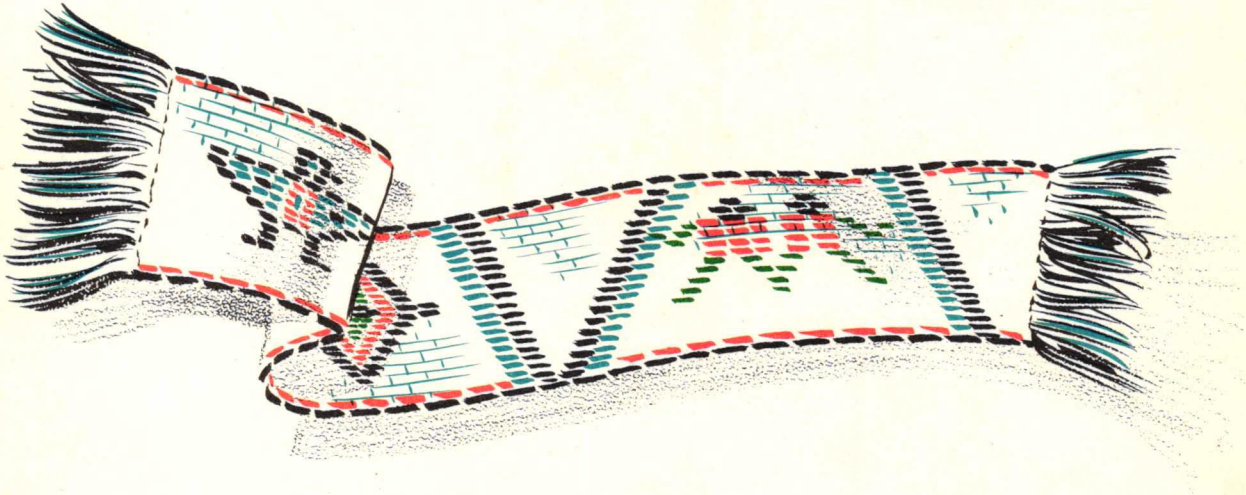

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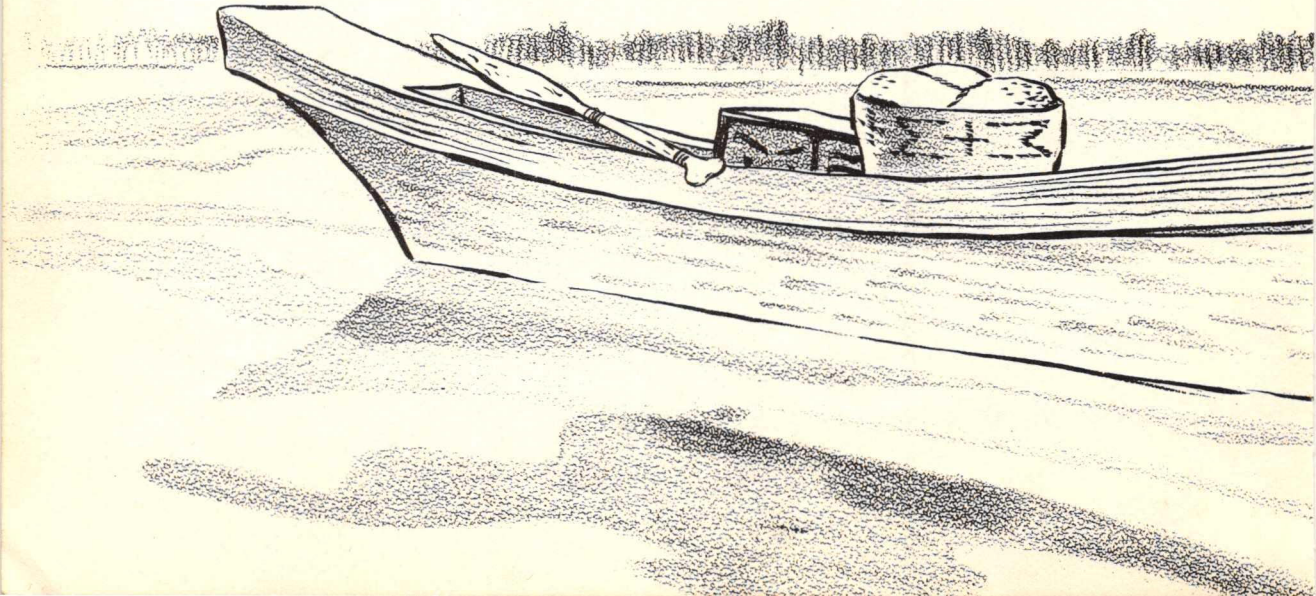
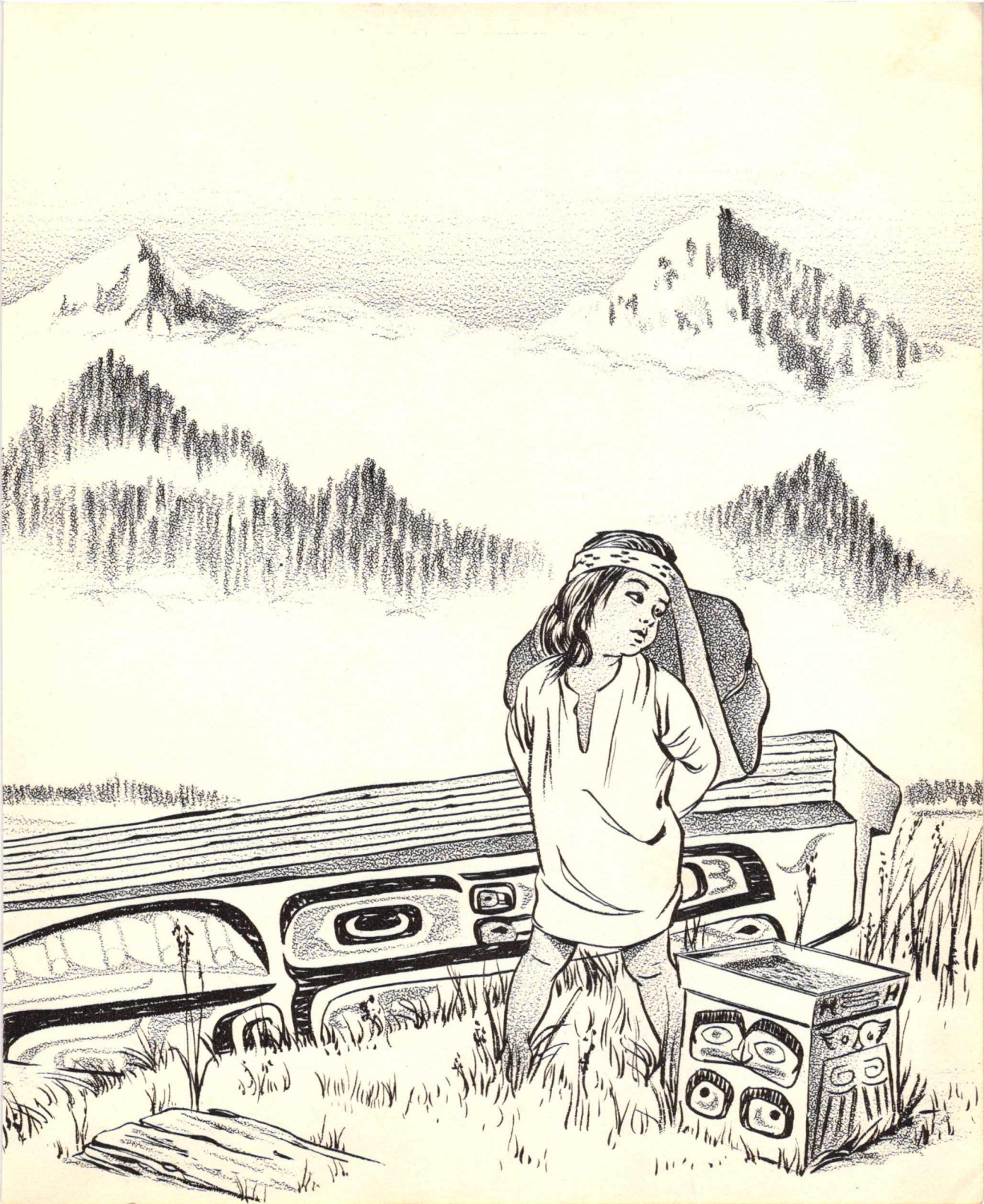
There was a time when no people lived in this land of ours. There were only the wild animals.

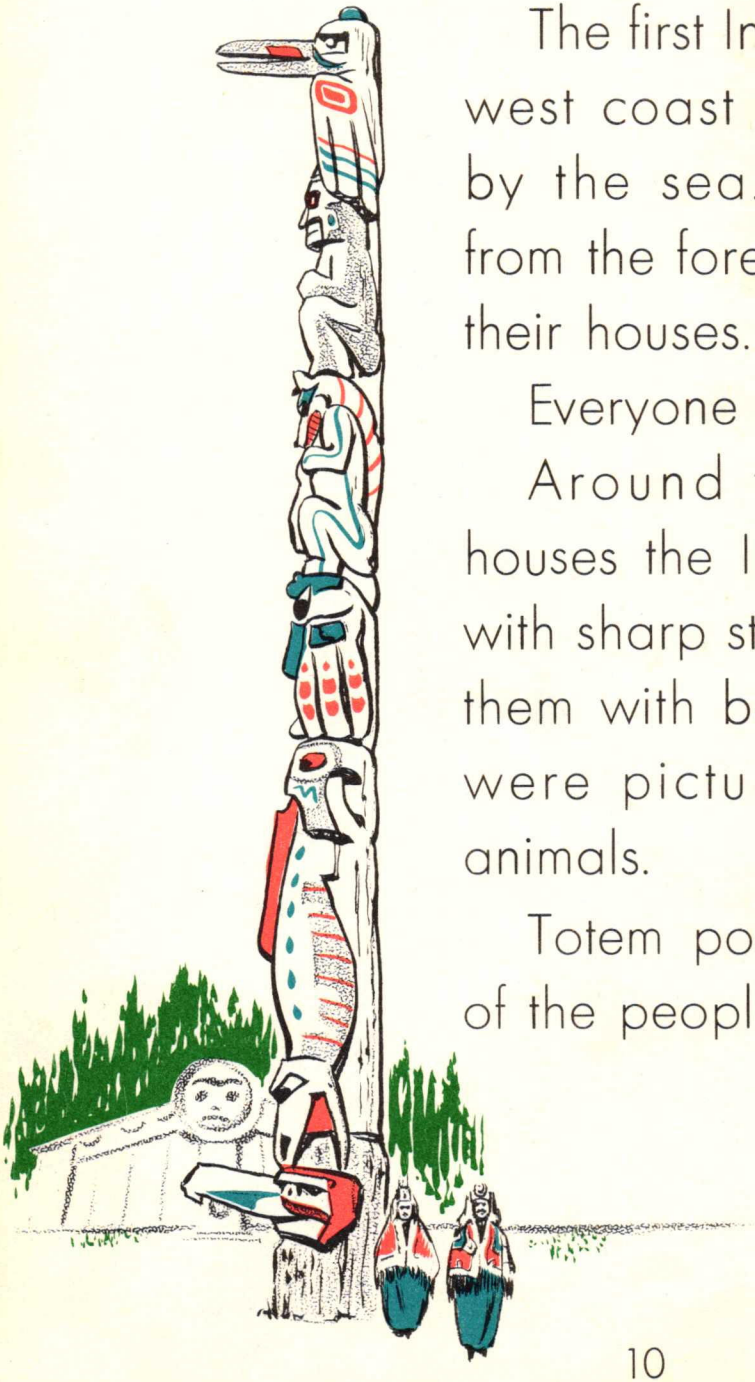
It is thought that the first Indians came across the narrow sea to the northwest coast of this country.

The Indians lived in big families called TRIBES.

There were mother and father Indians. There were little boy and girl Indians. They all had red skin and black hair.







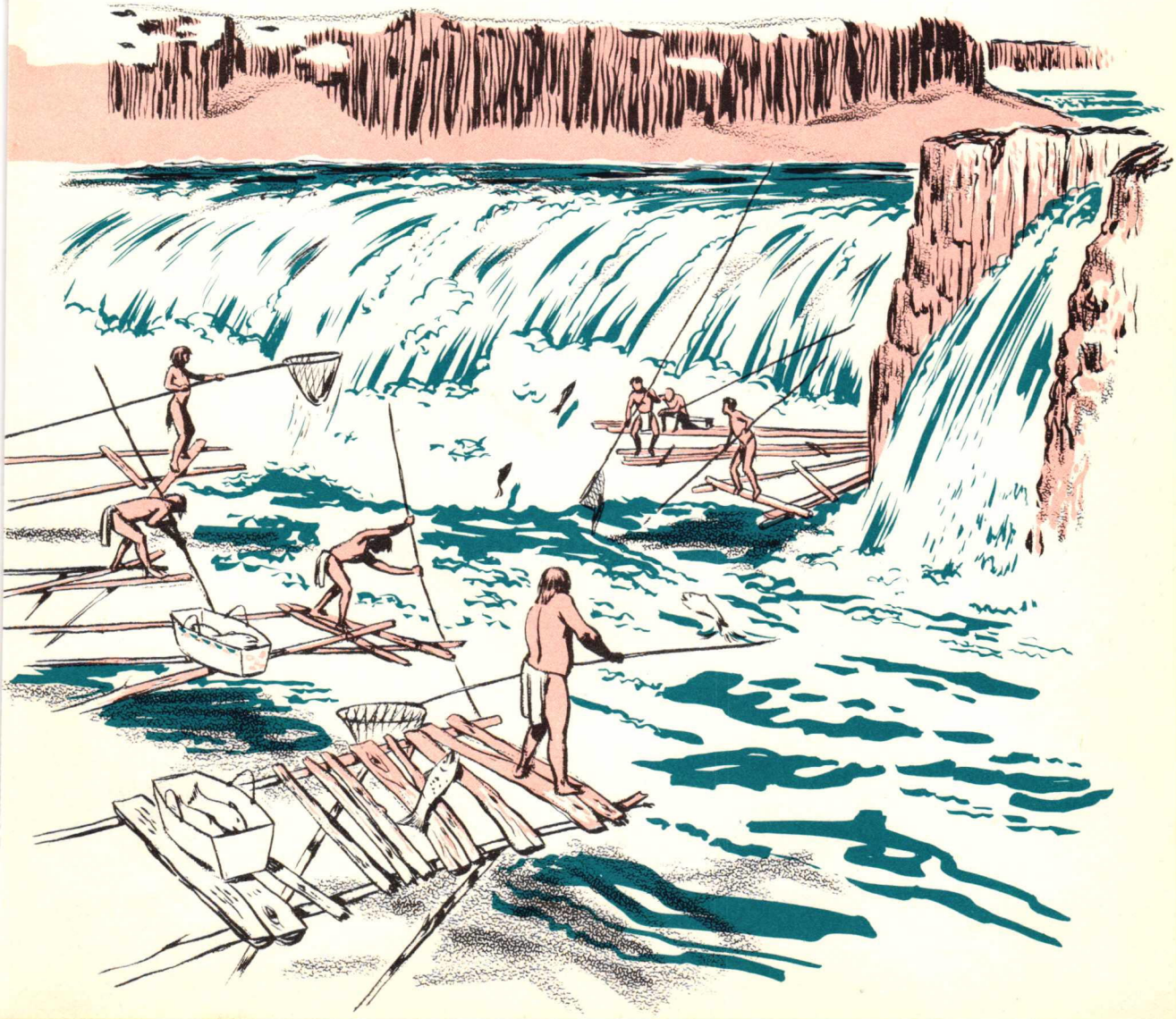
The first Indians on the northwest coast built their houses by the sea. They used trees from the forest near by to build their houses.

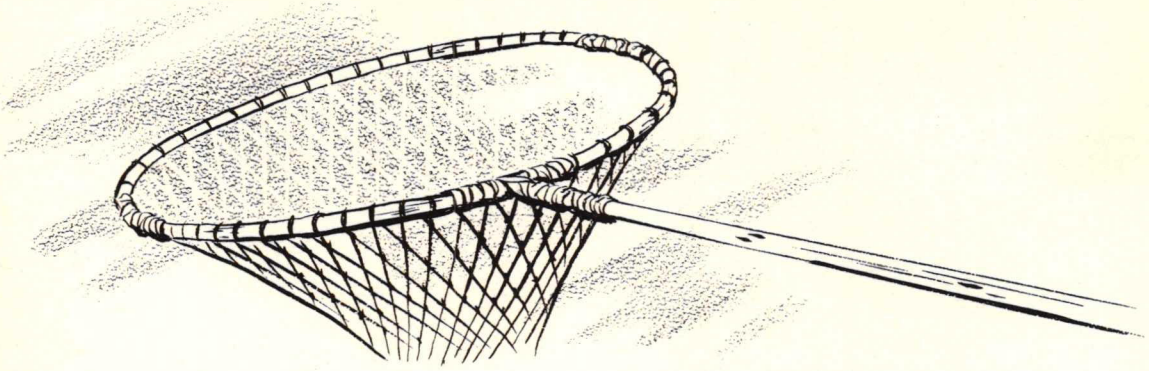
Everyone helped.

Around the tops of their houses the Indians cut pictures with sharp stones. They painted them with bright colors. There were pictures of birds and animals.

Totem poles told the stories of the people in the houses.

The Indian fathers made many canoes from logs. These Indians got most of their food from the sea and the rivers.



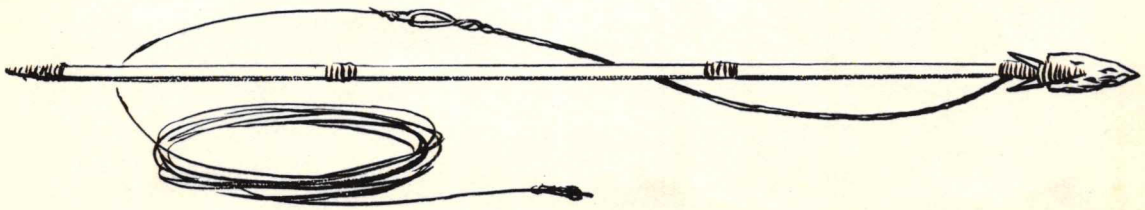


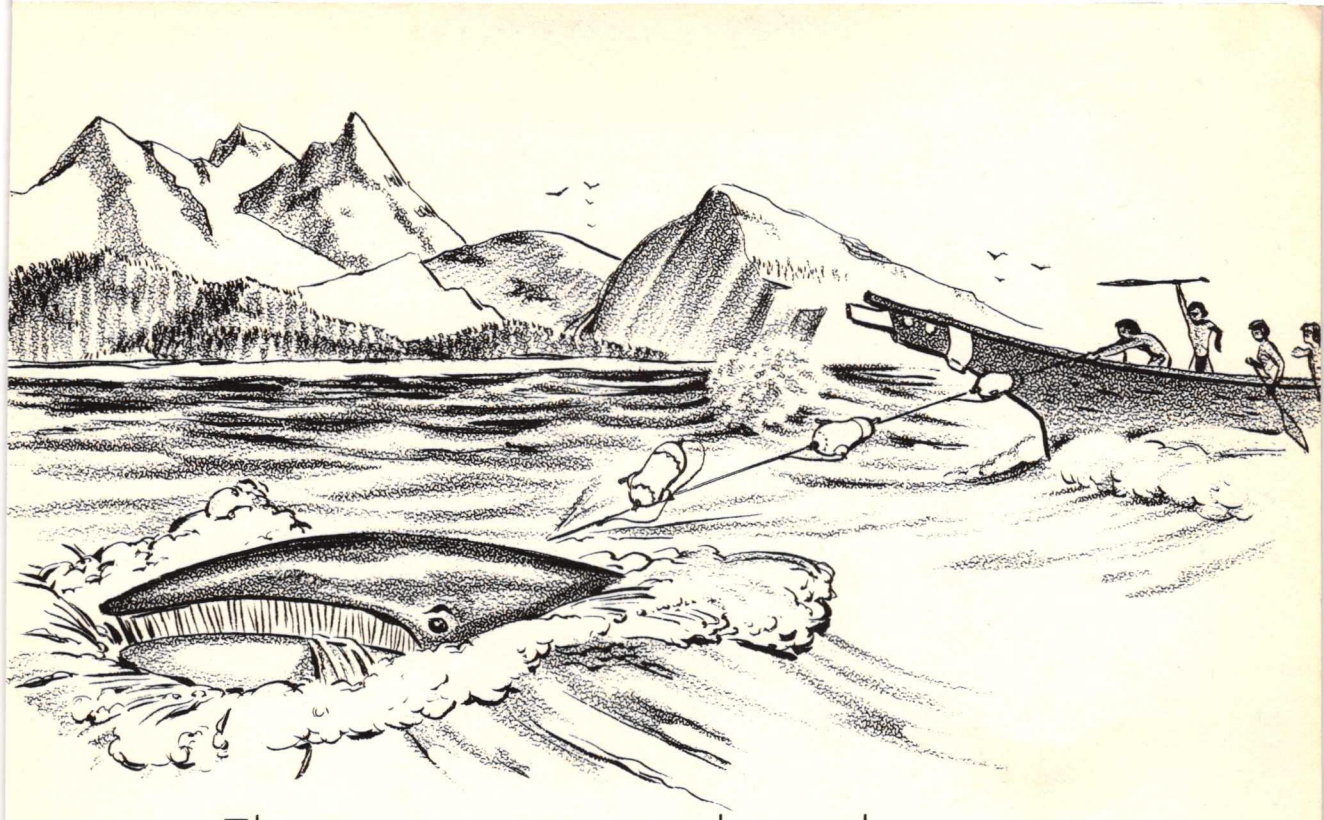
Almost every day the Indian fathers went fishing. Often the Indian boys went with them.

When they went out in small canoes they took their fishing nets. They caught many small fish with these nets.

When they went out in big canoes, they took their harpoons.

Now they would paddle far out on the sea to catch a giant whale.



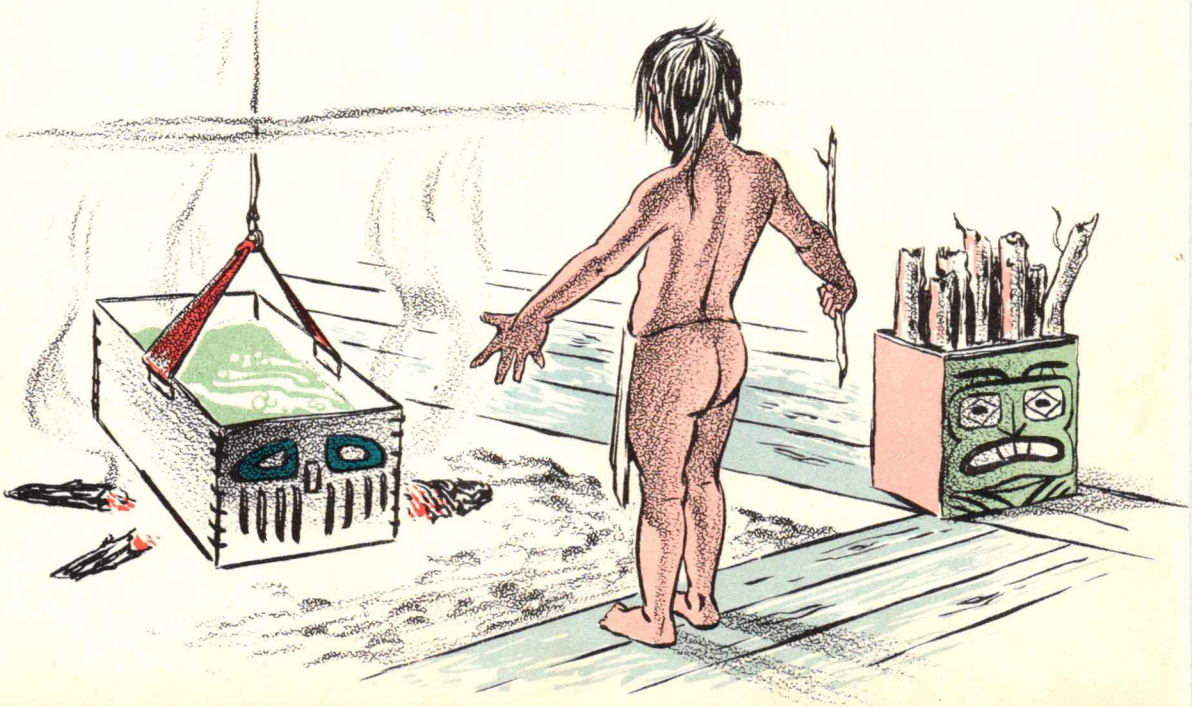


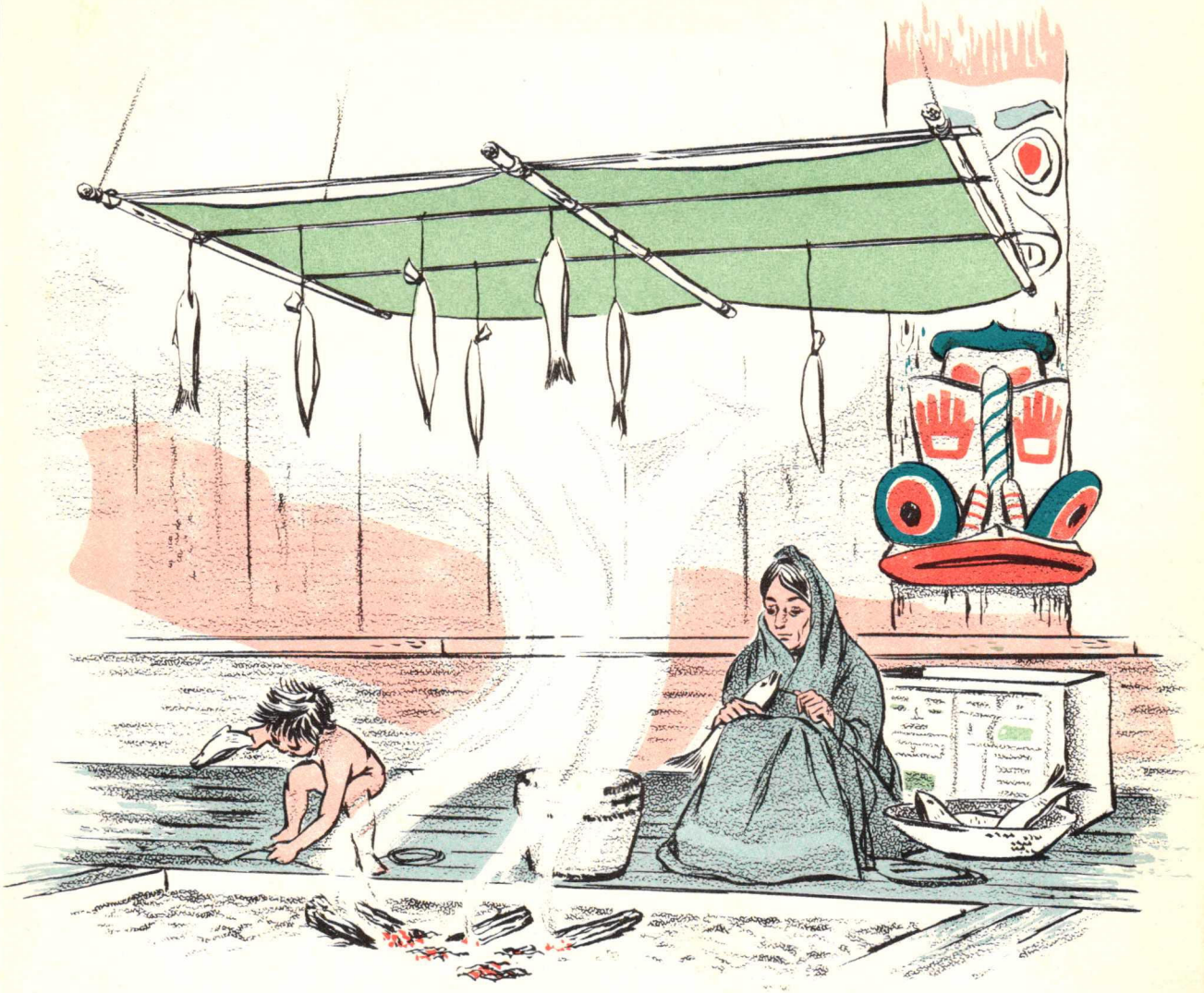
The strongest men threw harpoons at the whale. The whale could swim for a long time with the harpoons in it.

Swish! Away went the whale. It was very exciting.

At last the whale would stop. The Indians had killed it. How happy they were! Here was meat for the tribe.

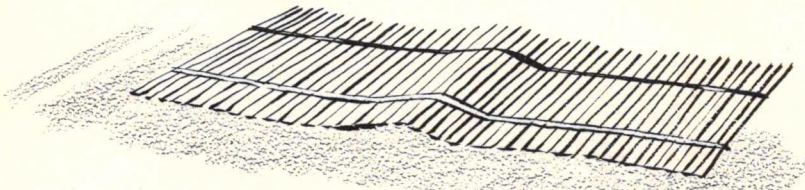
Everybody helped cut up the whale. The meat would last a long time. The Indian mothers and little girls cleaned the meat with sharp shells. Then they cooked some of it in wooden pots and ate it right away.

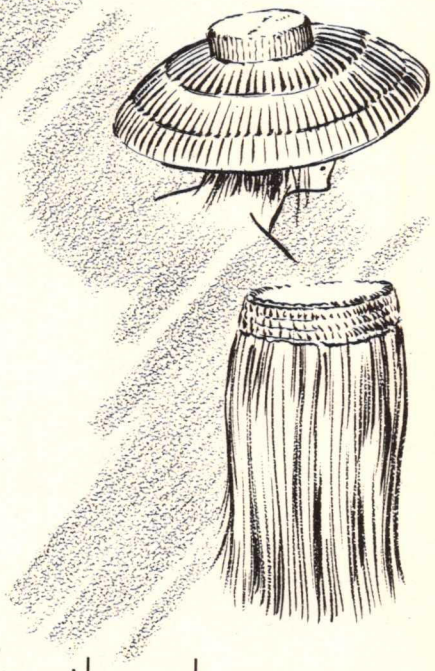




They hung the rest of it over the fire until the smoke dried it.

They put this smoked meat in wooden boxes for the long winter.





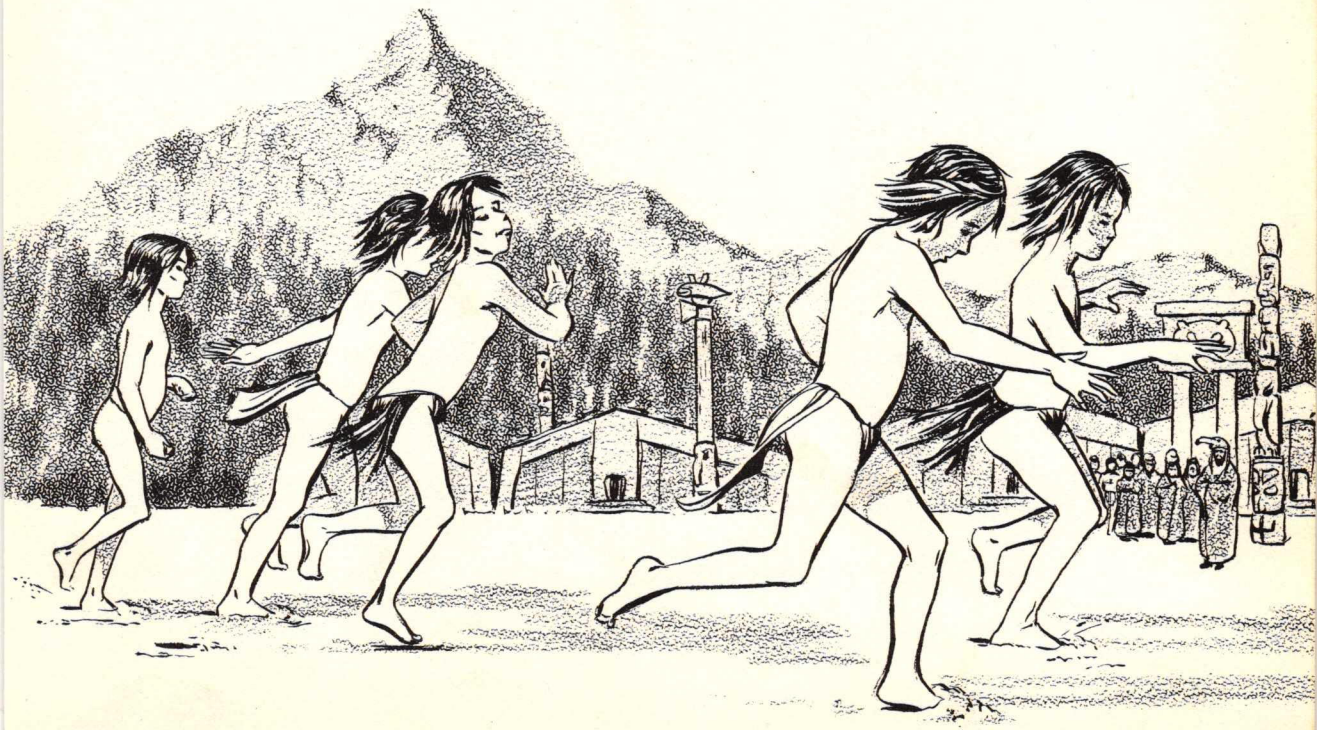
In the winter the Indian mothers wove skirts and hats out of dried grass and the bark of trees. They made warm robes for the men from animal skins.

They used wool from the dogs to make blankets. They wove mats for rugs. They wove baskets in which to carry fish. The little girls helped, too.

These Indians had give-away parties. The Indian who had the party

gave away many things. This was called a POTLATCH.

There was singing and dancing. The boy and girl Indians had races up and down the sand. Everyone had a good time.



Not all the Indians stayed by the sea. Some went to live on the grassy plains. There were few trees for houses. There was no sea with fish.

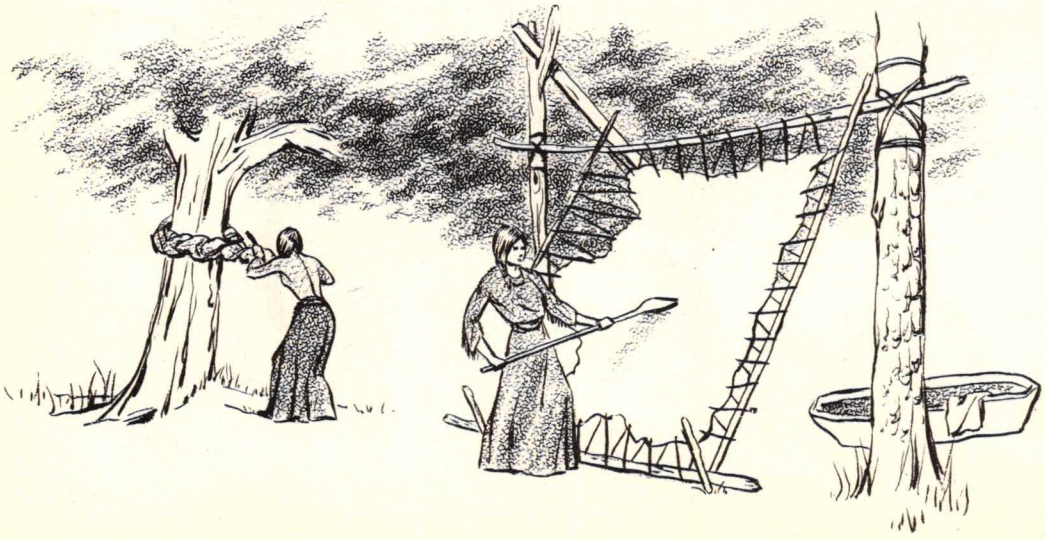
But there were animals, buffaloes, living on the plains. The Indians used the buffalo for many things.

The Indian men were brave hunters. They had to hunt the buffaloes so that the tribe could live.

How busy the Indian mothers were after the hunt! The Plains Indians used almost every part of the buffalo for something. The wool from the head was used to make warm blankets. The bones and horns made fine, sharp tools.

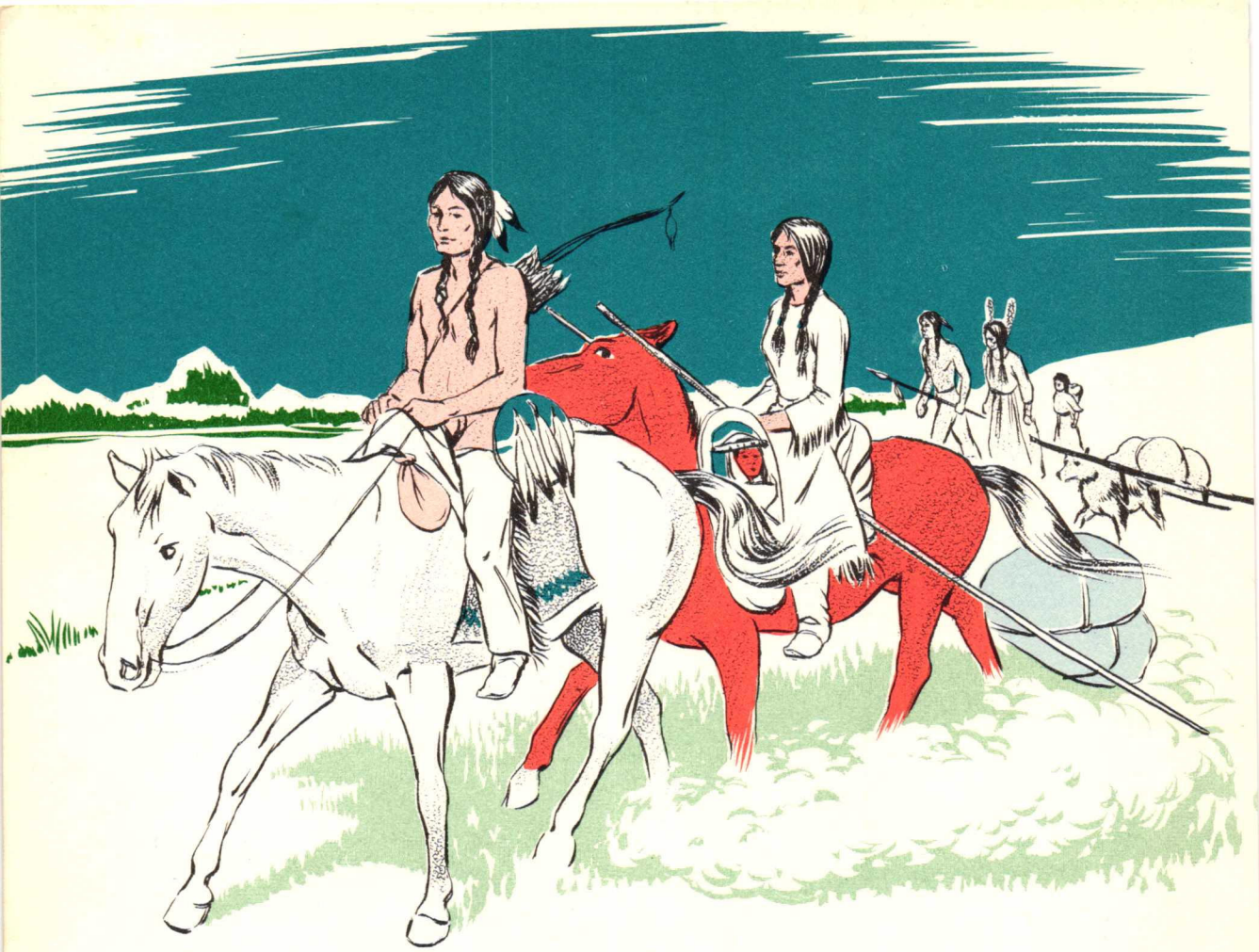
They scraped the hair from the skins and sewed them together for tepees.

They used some of the skins for clothes.



Buffalo meat had to be cut in strips and smoked over the fire.

Some of this meat was ground and mixed with dried berries. This kind of food was called PEMMICAN.



Sometimes the buffalo would move across the plains. Then the Indians would move, too.

They packed up all their things, even their tepees. The whole tribe moved.

The Plains Indians made pretty clothes of buffalo skins.

Indian mothers sewed them with bone needles. They painted colored bands on them, and trimmed them with beads.

When it was very warm, the men and boys wore very little.

A Plains Indian warrior painted his face with colored clay. Each tribe had its own war paint.

Every warrior carried his own shield.

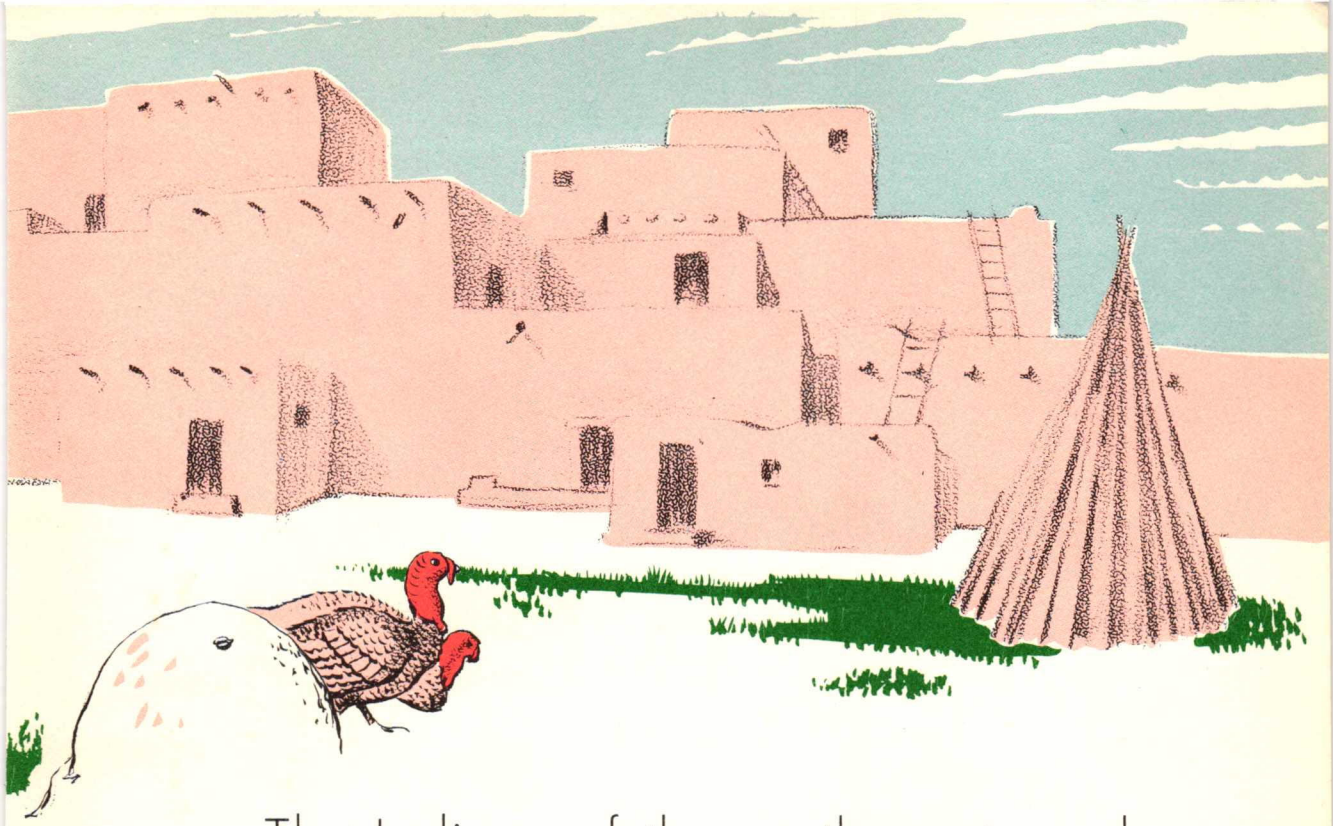
The bravest warriors wore bonnets of many eagle feathers.

All the Plains Indians did not speak the same language.

When different tribes met they talked with their hands. This was sign language.

Sometimes they used smoke signals. They held a blanket over a fire. When they took the blanket off, a puff of smoke rose into the sky. Smoke puffs could be seen from many miles away.

Some Indians moved to the land of the south west. Here there was very little rain. The days were hot. This was desert land.



The Indians of the south west used desert clay mixed with stones and grass to make bricks. With these they built houses, one on top of another.

Wooden ladders led from one house to the next. These houses were called PUEBLOS. Indians who lived in them were called Pueblo Indians.

The Pueblo Indians grew corn, beans and squash in their gardens.

It was hard to grow things in this dry country. The Indians had to carry water from the streams to their gardens.

The Indian mothers spent many hours grinding corn between stones.

They made thin corn bread. They made corn dumplings, and corn stew.

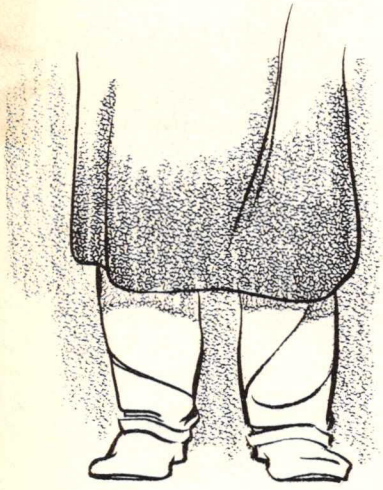
They cooked most of their foods in round, brick ovens.

The Pueblos were happy when it rained on their gardens.

They did not know what made it rain. Some thought that there were strange people living under the ground. These people could do almost anything.

To bring the rain, the Indians did the snake dance. The dancers carried snakes.

At the end of the dance they thought the snakes went back to tell the underground people to send rain.



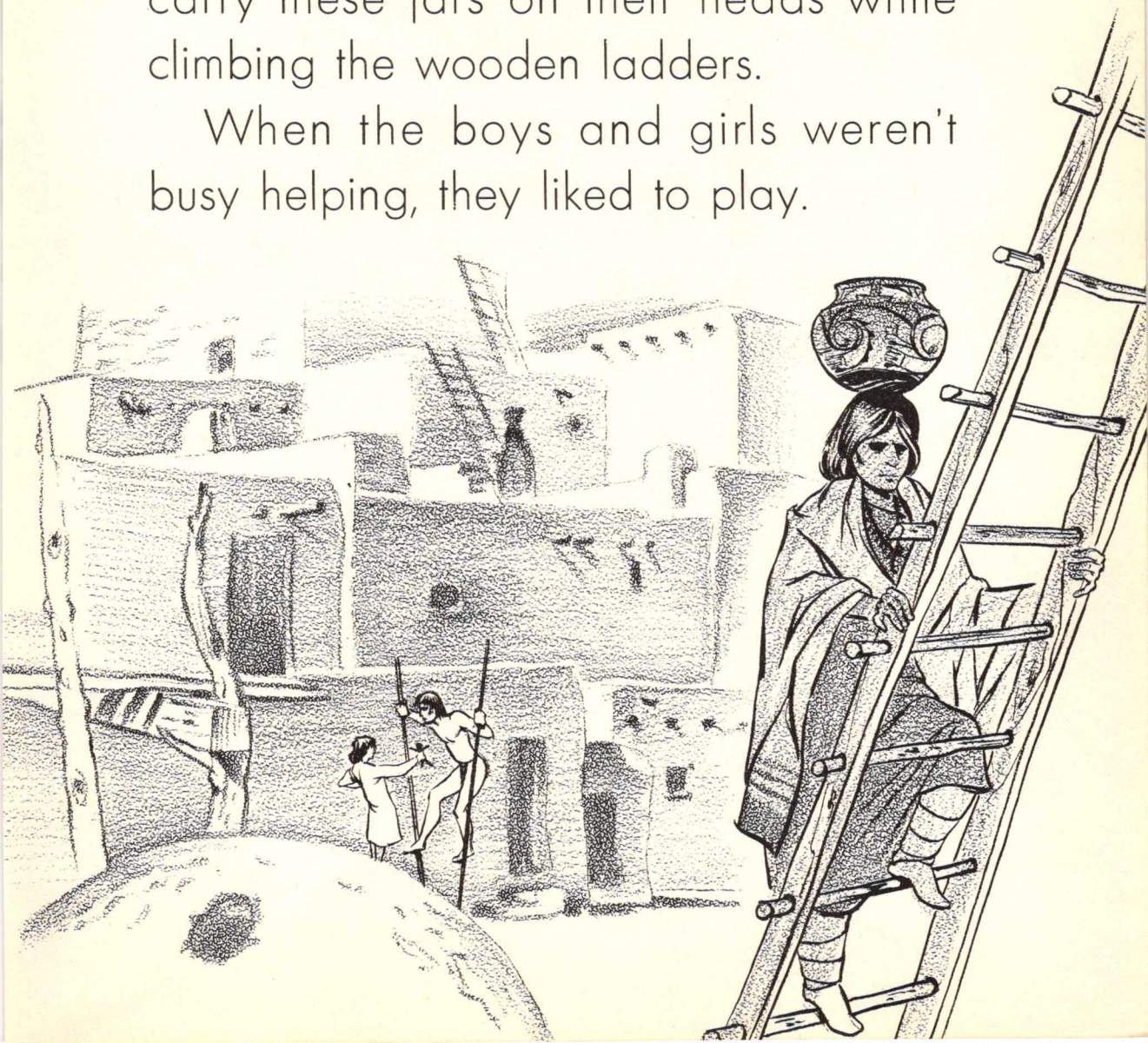
Pueblo mothers found wild cotton growing in the desert. They wove it into cloth.

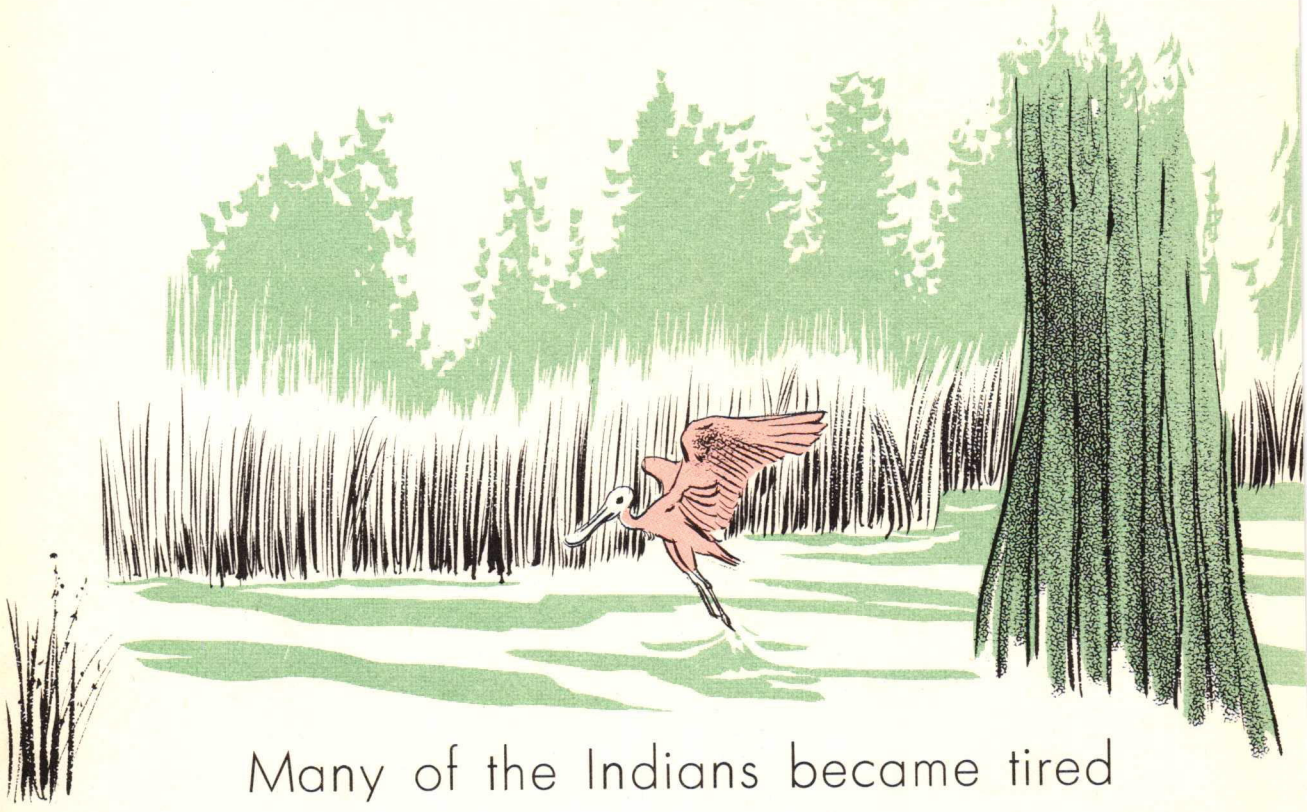
They sewed dresses, skirts and shirts. They trimmed the edges with colored threads.

Everyone wore leather boots. There were sharp rocks and rough grasses on the ground.

The mothers made clay jars to carry water. Even the little girls learned to carry these jars on their heads while climbing the wooden ladders.

When the boys and girls weren't busy helping, they liked to play.





Many of the Indians became tired of living in a land where there was so little rain. Some of them moved along the south land to the east.

At last they found a place where there was always plenty of water. The rain stayed in the ground and made it damp. These lands were called SWAMPS.

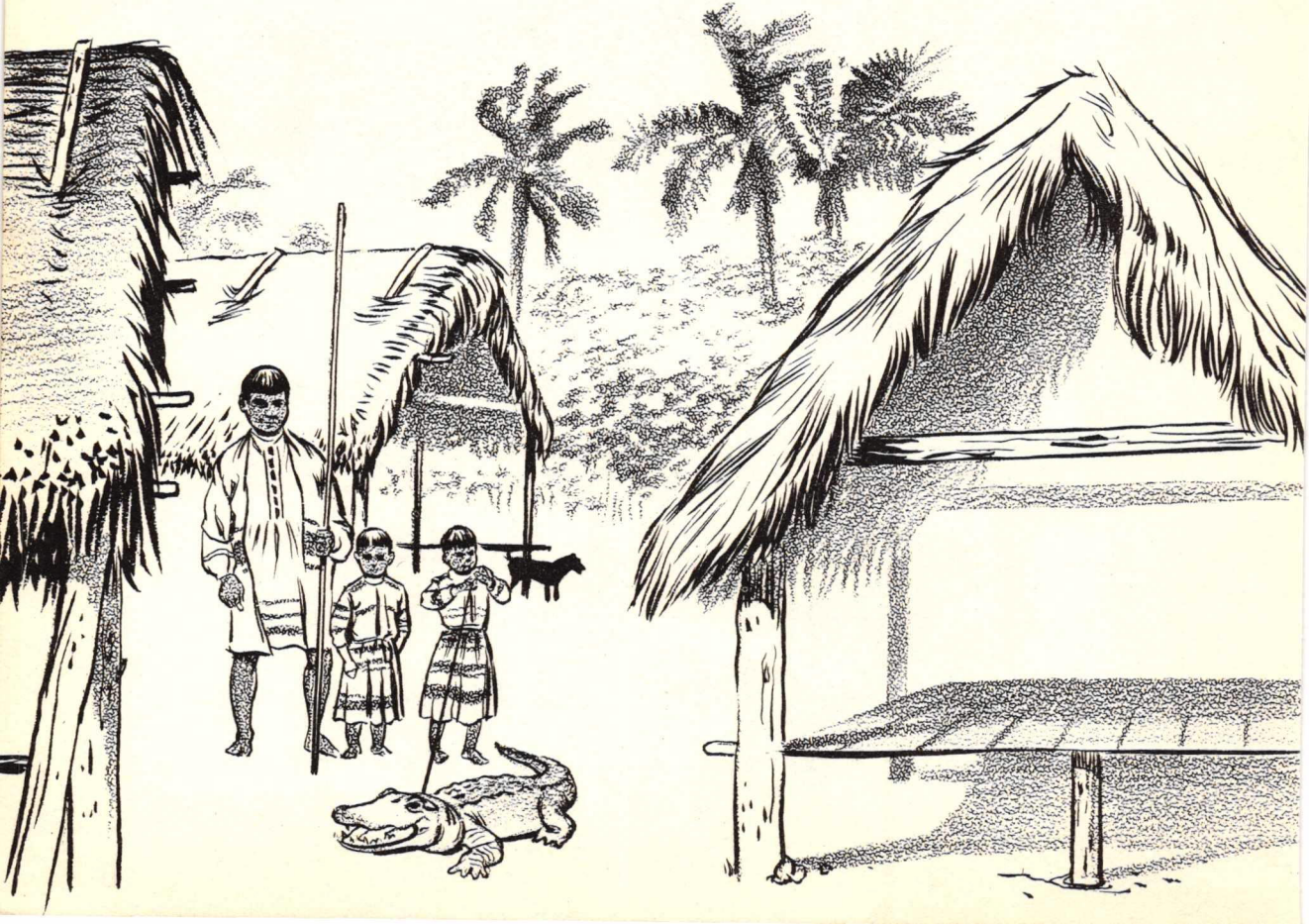
The Indians who stayed in the swamps were the Seminoles.

It was a beautiful, misty green land with tall trees and green grasses.

Most beautiful of all were the many colored birds that lived there. There were blue, yellow, red and pink birds.

The ground was so damp that the Seminole Indians built their houses on posts. The roof was made of wood and covered with palm leaves.

It was so hot that many houses had no walls.

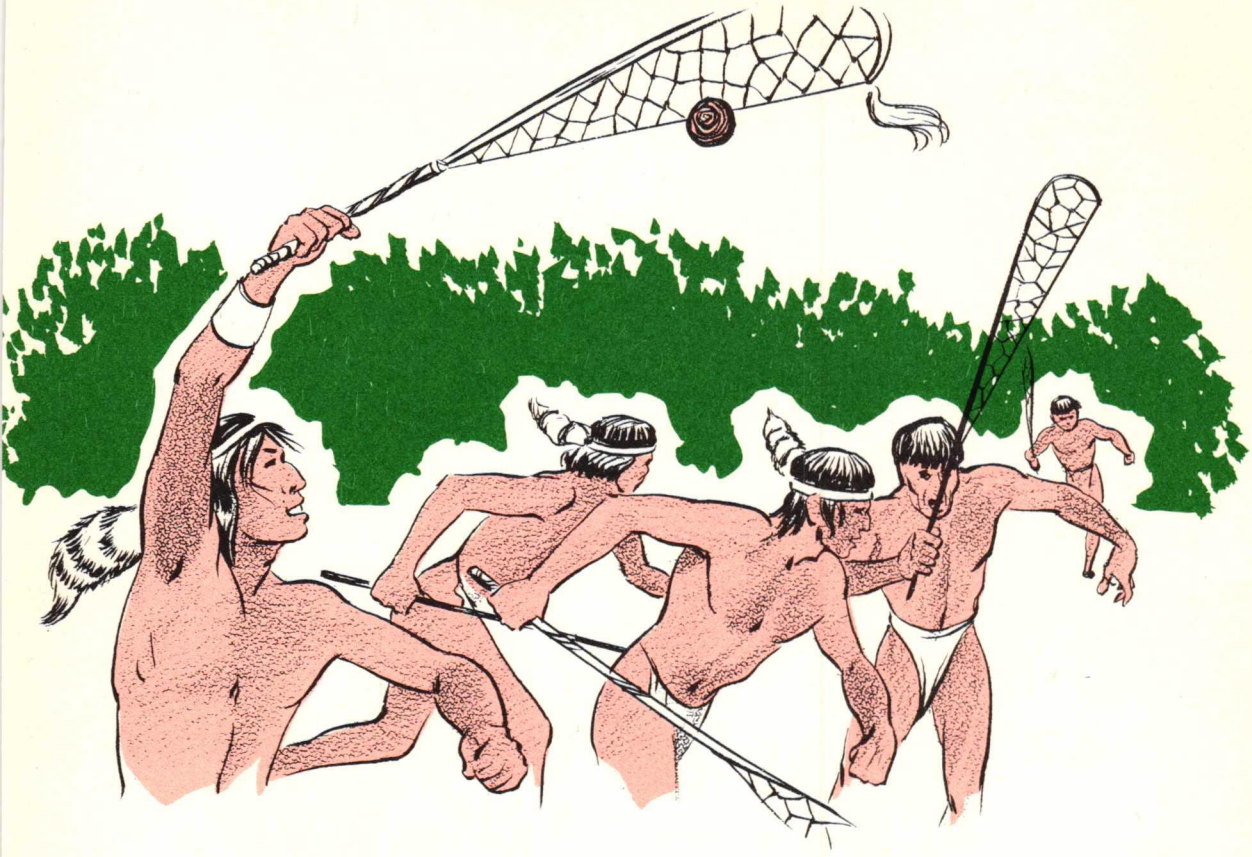


While the Seminoles went about their work, they wore very little clothing. They hunted deer and wild turkeys with bows and arrows.

They took good care of their vegetable gardens. They fished in the streams and lakes. They knew how to use nets and spears.

They even knew how to catch fish with their hands.

Sometimes they hunted the pretty birds with blow-guns. They blew a sharp piece of cane through a long pole. This way they did not spoil the feathers. They liked to wear them.

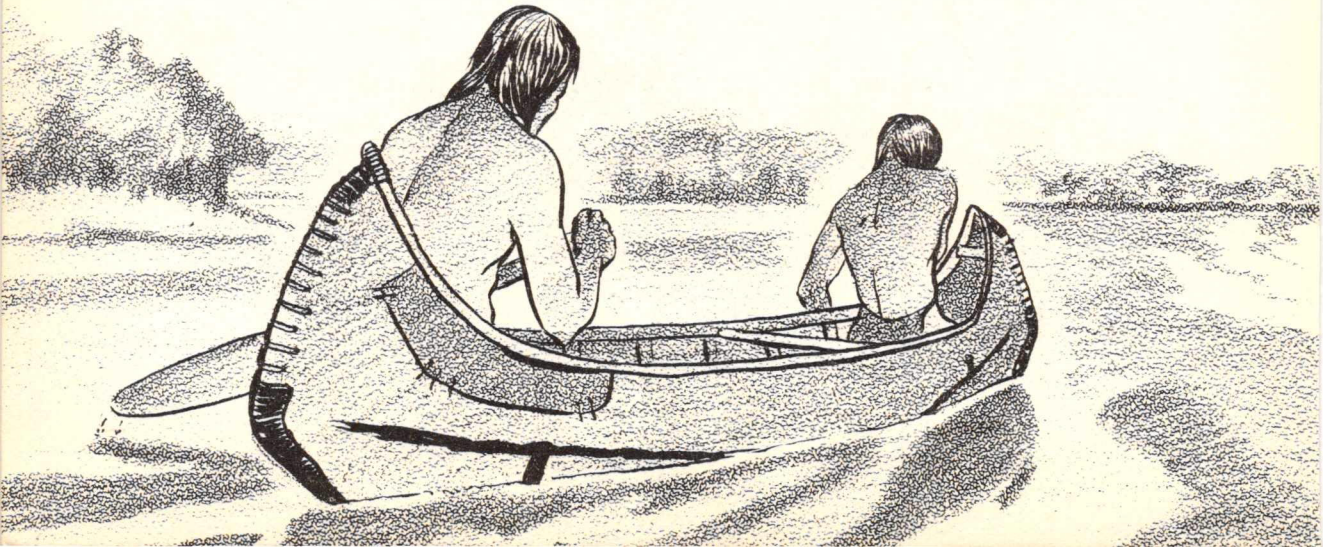


These Indians liked to play ball games. In one of these games, each player carried a long stick with a net on the end. They threw the ball back and forth and caught it in this net. The players wore tails of different animals for good luck.

Some Indians moved to the north-east woodlands. They hunted deer and wild turkey in the forests with bows and arrows.

They fished with nets and spears. Over the waters of the rivers and the sea skimmed the birch-bark canoes.

There were grapes and berries growing wild.

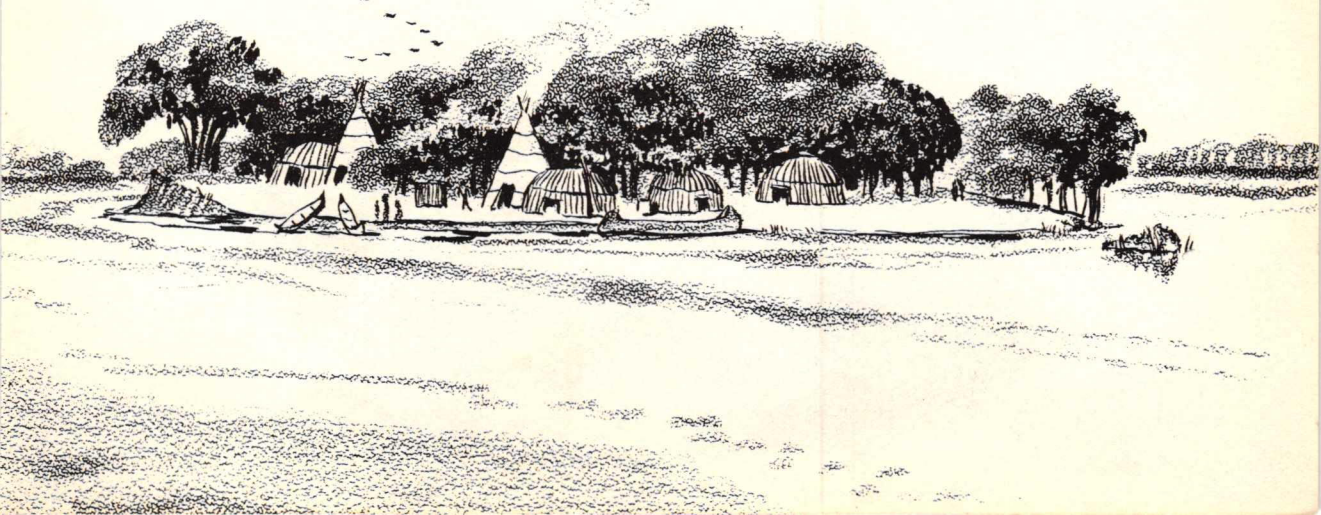


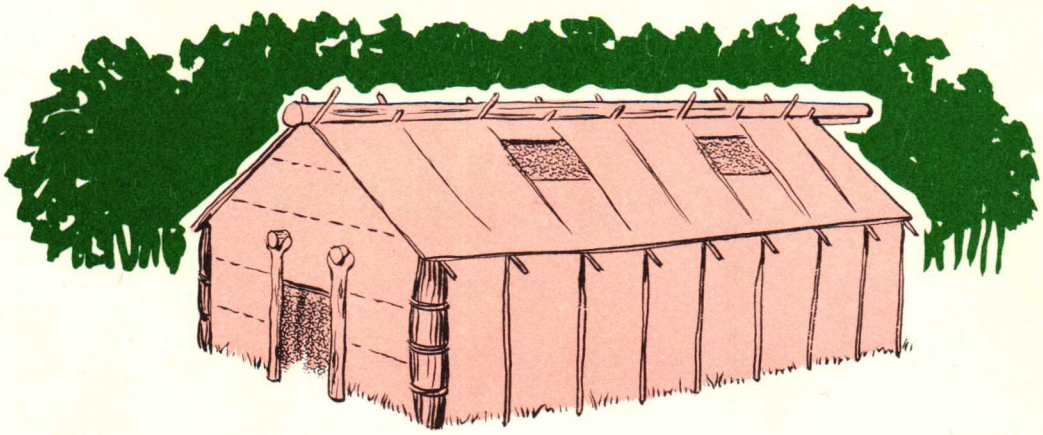
In their gardens they grew corn, beans, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes.

The Indian mothers were good cooks. To cook meat, they filled a jar with water. They put in the meat. Then they dropped in hot stones. This made the water boil and cooked the meat.

Sometimes they made a corn cake called HOMINY.

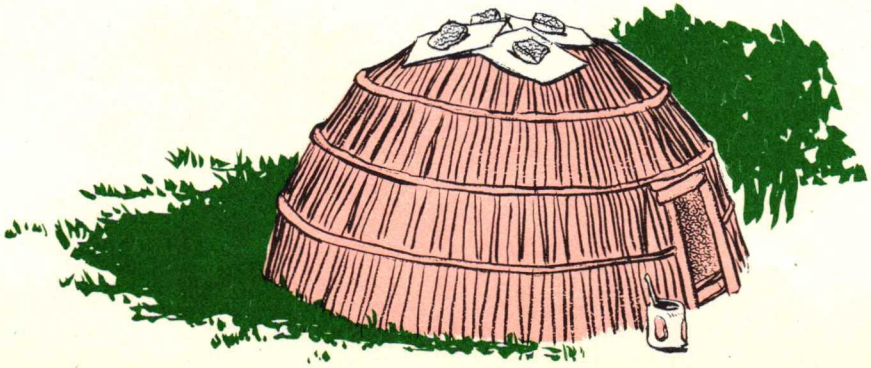
The Woodland Indians used logs and tree bark for their houses.

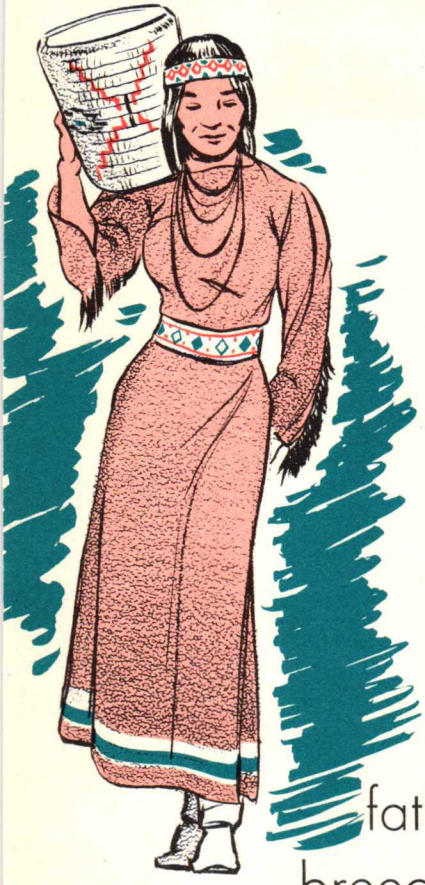




The Iroquois Indians lived in the LONG HOUSE. There was a long hall through the middle. There were rooms on either side. Twenty families could live in one long house.

The Delaware Indians lived in round, one-room houses called WIGWAMS.





In the summer the fathers and boys wore breechcloths and moccasins. In winter they wore leggings and shirts of deerskin. The mothers and girls wore short skirts. They had robes of skins and fur for winter. They wore earrings and strings of animals' teeth.

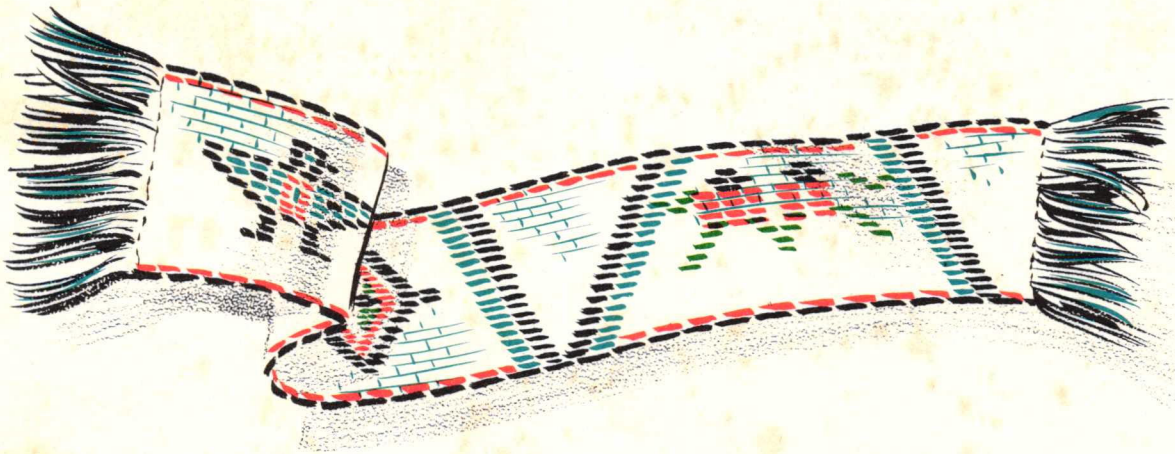
In winter the ground was covered with deep snow. Then the Indian fathers made flat mats of wood. They tied these to their feet with leather.

Then they were able to walk on top of the snow.

The Woodland Indians liked to be strong and healthy.

Every spring and fall men put on false faces. They went from house to house. They sang loudly. They shook turtle-shell rattles.

They thought that they were chasing sickness away.



The Indians made long belts of purple and white shells. These were called WAMPUM BELTS.

The Indians made pictures with these shells. The pictures told the story of their people. They had no books. Long strings of wampum were often used for money.

Soon there were Indians working and playing in all parts of the land.

They used the things that were in their part of the country. They wore different kinds of clothes. They lived in different kinds of houses. They ate different kinds of food.

That was long, long ago—before the white settlers came.

The End